

Acton Community Housing Corporation

Nancy Tavernier, Chairman

Ryan Bettez, Vice Chairman

Acton Town Hall

472 Main Street

Acton, Massachusetts, 01720

Telephone (978) 263-9611 (Nancy)

(617) 828-4197 (Ryan)

28 WILLOW STREET/214 CENTRAL STREET, WEST ACTON VILLAGE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Acton Community Housing Corporation – Who are we?

The Town Board responsible for developing affordable housing strategies and implementing affordable housing programs in the Town of Acton. This quasi-public body is a Selectmen-appointed board, created by a Legislative Home Rule petition in 1996. Prior to this, ACHC was a private non-profit housing partnership group formed by the Selectmen in 1986.

ACHC has five full members and three associate members. Most of the current members are professionally involved in affordable housing development. The Town's charge to ACHC is to "provide affordable housing opportunities for working families with incomes at less than 80% of the Area Median Income." Currently 80% AMI for a family of four is \$66,150.

2. Where is the Willow/Central St. town-owned property?

The subject property consists of two adjoining parcels of land in a residential neighborhood in West Acton. The parcels have frontage on two streets, at 28 Willow St. and 214 Central St. The current zoning is Village Residential (VR), which would allow by special permit from the Planning Board up to 4 attached multifamily units on 15,000 square feet or more of land. The 28 Willow Street parcel is 8,091 square feet and contains an approximate 2,000 square foot office and garage building. The 214 Central Street parcel is 7,708 square feet. The two parcels combined are 15,799 square feet.

3. How did the Town come to acquire these parcels and at what cost?

These two parcels of land were taken by the Town of Acton for unpaid back taxes in the mid-90's. It was most recently used as a septic system installation and repair company, until approximately 1995. The Town of Acton has spent approximately \$70,000 for significant environmental remediation work through the 21E process to clean up a petroleum contamination problem. The site has been cleaned up and approved by DEP and the Town for residential re-use.

4. What makes this an attractive site for redevelopment?

This is an ideal site for a small multi-family development. The lot is located within close walking distance to the West Acton Village Center. Infill housing would be consistent with the Town's Master Plan and the Planning Board's emphasis on concentrating development within and near the village cores. There are other high density properties nearby, a duplex abuts the parcel on one side and another is across the street. A thoughtfully designed multi-unit project would blend in quite well. From the ACHC's perspective, the proposed development would get a piece of town-owned property back on the tax rolls, eliminate an eyesore and a safety hazard, and create much needed affordable housing.

5. What is the proposed design for this site?

The ACHC proposes to build a duplex farmhouse style building on the Central Street side of the parcel and a single family bungalow style building on the Willow Street side. The duplex would contain a 3-BR unit and a 2-BR unit, the bungalow would be a 3-BR unit. All three units would be sold or rented to low-moderate income households. The wastewater disposal system has been designed to accommodate a maximum of 8 bedrooms. (See specific design materials included in information packet)

6. How will the construction costs be funded?

ACHC, with the assistance of Massachusetts Housing Partnership, has put together a Sources and Uses Plan that demonstrates the financial feasibility of the proposal. Proceeds from the sale of the units, CPA funds, gift funds, and grants will be part of the development revenue mix.

7. What makes this proposal attractive to the State housing agencies?

The ACHC received a state grant of \$25,000 from DHCD and MassHousing as part of the Priority Development Fund program. The grant has been used to do preliminary site planning and architectural design. The proposed development has caught the eye of several agencies due to its location in a village area and its Smart Growth implications.

8. What makes this proposal Smart Growth?

The proposed development of multi-family housing on this site is consistent with the following Commonwealth principles of sustainable development (Smart Growth):

1. **Redevelop First.** This site was originally a residential unit that was converted to a garage and office use where cars and trucks were repaired. Its most recent use was by a septic disposal company using the building as an office and the parking area for septic disposal trucks. The proposed reuse of the property will enhance the neighborhood by cleaning up the long vacant site and eyesore while

providing housing consistent with the existing neighborhood without creating sprawl.

2. **Concentrate Development.** The West Acton Village area is a dense area with many large vintage homes, multi-family dwellings, and a diverse assortment of small retail and service businesses. This parcel is located in the Village area and within a one mile radius is a small public library, an Elderly Housing complex, two elementary schools, two churches, a playground, a cemetery, several restaurants, several personal service businesses, retail establishments, a pharmacy, a post office, and conservation areas with public access trails.

3. **Restore and enhance the environment.** This site was a 21E site that needed remedial abatement. The Town of Acton took the land for back taxes and later discovered the soil was contaminated by gasoline. The Town has now cleaned up the site at its own expense, and it has been approved by the DEP for residential redevelopment. The building on the site is boarded up and the land area is overgrown and unsightly. Housing development will be a welcome improvement on the site, enhance the neighborhood, and restore tax revenues to the Town .

4. **Expand Housing Opportunities.** The development of this site will provide needed units for low and moderate income families.

5. **Provide Transportation Choice.** The site is within walking distance to businesses in West Acton Village. It is approximately 1.3 miles from the South Acton Commuter rail station and there is a sidewalk to the station for almost the entire route. The site is also located within 2 miles of Rt. 2 and 5 miles from Rt. 495 for easy access to the highways.

9. Does the Acton Master Plan support the use of town land for affordable housing?

Yes, in 1990 and again in 1998, the Acton Master Plan supports these Strategies for Promoting Affordable Housing that would be met with this proposal:

1. Strategy H2: Seek opportunities to acquire buildable town-owned properties that might be suitable for donations towards the development of affordable housing
2. Strategy H4: Direct the focus of affordable housing initiatives to provide housing for the elderly, young families, and low and moderate income residents in our community.

10. What housing needs are identified in the new Community Development Plan entitled "To Live in Acton"?

Acton's specific housing needs were identified in 2004 through a needs assessment process and are listed in order of priority:

1. Affordable rental units for very-low and low-income families;

2. Affordable rental units designed for low-, moderate- and middle-income senior citizens and persons with disabilities;
3. Affordable homeownership units for moderate-income families;
4. Affordable homeownership units in a range of residential use types and sizes for moderate and middle-income seniors; and
5. Homeownership units at below-market prices, affordable to middle-income homebuyers.

11. Which needs will be met with this proposal?

The units will be sold to low-moderate income households with incomes no greater than 80% of the Area Median Income. An option for one of the units is to sell it to the Acton Housing Authority for use as a rental unit for low income families. Other options include selling a unit at a deed-restricted below-market price or as a market unit to help finance the project.

12. How does ACHC propose to accomplish this proposed development and what are the steps in the process?

1. Board of Selectmen voted to give ACHC site control of the property.
2. ACHC has applied to DHCD LIP program to get site eligibility from a subsidizing agency, which is necessary for the next step
3. ACHC will apply to ZBA for a Comprehensive Permit. A comp. permit is needed because the units are not attached, triggering the need for a zoning variance.
4. Once the Comprehensive Permit is approved, ACHC will prepare an RFP, with help of consultant. The project will be put out to bid using the required state bid regulations. Included in the RFP will be the Comp. Permit, DHCD LIP approval, Wastewater Disposal plan, and preliminary architectural design.
5. ACHC will select the developer who is most likely able to complete the development according to the conceptual design and whose proposal best meets the RFP.
6. Town Meeting will vote to authorize the Selectmen to convey the Property to ACHC on certain terms and conditions for purposes of re-conveyance, subject to applicable law, to a developer that will develop affordable housing on the Property. The ACHC will reimburse the town ~\$203,000 for all the costs incurred on the land through clean-up, legal, and back taxes.
7. Ownership will transfer to the developer who will then develop the property according to the comprehensive permit.